

## Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 MOGADI 02131 01 OF 02 150149Z  
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W  
-----034636 150211Z /62

R 140955Z SEP 78  
FM AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6906

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 MOGADISCIO 2131

STADIS////////////////////////////////

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E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PFOR, SO, US  
SUBJ: MEETING WITH GENERAL OMAR HAJI MOHAMED

1. SUMMARY: BASED ON MY DESIRE TO OPEN AS MANY CHANNELS AS POSSIBLE TO THE SOMALI GOVERNMENT, I AUTHORIZED THE CONSUL TO MEET WITH THE VICE-MINISTER OF DEFENSE GENERAL OMAR HAJI MOHAMED, AT THE LATTER'S REQUEST, ON SEPTEMBER 8. WHILE GENERAL OMAR'S MESSAGE WAS NOT NEW, THE MEETING WAS REMARK-ABLE IN THE FRANK TONE OF THE DISUCSSIONS AND IN THE MANNER IN WHICH IT WAS ARRANGED. THE PRIMARY MESSAGE OMAR WISHED TO CONVEY WAS A STRONG PLEA FOR A GESTURE OF POLITICAL SUPPORT FOR SOMALIA. END SUMMARY.

2. THE CONSUL CALLED ON THE DIRECTOR OF THE GENERAL RELATPONS DEPARTMENT OF THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE, COLONEL (NAVY) SAID ABDQLLAH IN ORDER TO EXPRESS THE EMBASSY'S SATISFACTION WITH THE VREELAND VISIT. COL SAID STATED THAT THE MINISTRY HAD NOTED THAT THE CONSUL WAS WORKING HARD AT IMPROVING RELATIONS BETWEEN SOMALIA AND THE U.S. LOCALLY, AND STATED THAT GENERAL OMAR HAD EXPRESSED A DESIRE TO MEET HIM. HOWEVER, AS OMAR WAS OUT OF THE OFFICE ON SEPTEMBER JUN SAID CALLED THE CONSUL ON THE

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EVENING OF SEPTEMBER 7 AND REQUESTED HIM TO COME TO THE MINISTRY ON SEPTEMBER 8.

3. SPEAKING IN ITALIAN, GENERAL OMAR STATED THAT HE WAS PERSONALLY PLEASED WITH THE SMOOTHNESS WHICH CHARACTERIZED THE VREELAND VISIT, THANKS TO HARD WORK ON BOTH THE SOMALI AND AMERICAN SIDES. GENERAL OMAR THEN LAUNCHED INTO A

DESCRIPTION OF SOMALIA'S DIFFICULTIES SINCE THE WITHDRAWAL FROM THE OGADEN.

4. SPEAKING OF SOMALIA'S DEFENSIVE NEEDS, OMAR STATED THAT SOMALIA WAS RECEIVING ARMS FROM FRIENDS, BUT THAT CRITICALLY NEEDED ITEMS WERE UNOBTAINABLE BECAUSE OF THE AMERICAN "EMBARGO" WHICH PREVENTED EVEN SOMALIA'S FRIENDS FROM HELPING HER. SPECIFICALLY, OMAR CITED A SERIOUS DEFICIENCY IN AIR DEFENSE. HE STATED THAT HE COULD DEFEND SOMALIA AGAINST AN EXPECTED ETHIOPIAN GROUND INVASION, ALTHOUGH THE INVADING FORCES MIGHT INITIALLY CAPTURE SUBSTANTIAL PORTIONS OF THE NORTH. HE SAID HE COULD HANDLE ENEMY TANKS, BUT THAT WITHOUT AIR DEFENSE AGAINST PLANES FLOWN BY CUBANS AND SOVIETS, SOMALIA'S DEFENSIVE CAPABILITY IS SERIOUSLY IMPAIRED. HE CITED SOMALIA'S DEMONSTRATED VULNERABILITY TO AIR ATTACK DURING AND AFTER THE WAR. HE ALSO SAID THAT THE INTERNATIONAL ARMS MERCHANTS WERE OFFERING SOPHISTICATED EQUIPMENT BUT AT VASTLY INFLATED PRICES WHICH SOMALIA WAS UNABLE AND UNWILLING TO PAY.

5. IN DESCRIBING SOMALI SUPPORT TO THE INSURGENTS, OMAR STATED THAT THE US SIMPLY DID NOT UNDERSTAND THE MAGNITUDE OF THE INTERNAL POLITICAL PROBLEM FACED BY THE GSDR. AT ALL LEVELS OF THE ARMY AND GOVERNMENT, SOMALIS HAD ACCEPTED OGADENIS INTO POSITIONS OF RESPONSIBILITY AND  
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AUTHORITY OVER A PERIOD OF YEARS. WHILE OUR REAL PROBLEM, MAR SAID, IS THE DEFENSE OF EXISTING SOMALI TERRITORY, WE COULD NOT ABANDON OR APPEAR TO ABANDON THE OGADENI CAUSE IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE WITHDRAWAL WITHOUT CREATING INTERNAL DIFFICULTIES NO SOMALI GOVERNMENT COULD WITHSTAND. OMAR STATED THAT THE DIRECT SUPPORT TO THE WSLF HAS IN FACT BEEN LARGELY PHASED OUT AND THAT THE WSLF HAS BEEN ENCOURAGED TO ESTABLISH DIRECT CONTACT WITH SYMPATHETIC SUPPORTERS OUTSIDE SOMALIA. MOST OF THE WSLF'S ARMS WERE CAPTURED DURING THE FIGHTING, BUT SOME NEW ARMS ARE COMING IN FROM THE OUTSIDE, BUT NOT FROM THE GSDR.

6. OMAR STATED THAT THE GSDR WAS ATTEMPTING TO EXERCISE GREAT RESTRAINT TOWARDS KENYA, DESPITE CONTINUING KENYAN PROVOCATIONS. MOST RECENTLY, HE SAID, THE KENYANS HAD FALSELY CLAIMED THAT THERE HAD BEEN A SHOOTING INCIDENT INSIDE KENYAN TERRITORY SHORTLY AFTER KENYATTA'S DEATH FOR THE PURPOSE OF INFLAMING KENYAN PUBLIC OPINION. OMAR CATEGORICALLY DENIED THAT ANY SUCH INCIDENT HAD TAKEN PLACE.

7. OMAR CONCLUDED BY SAYING THAT WHAT SOMALIA NEEDED ABOVE ALL ELSE WAS A GESTURE OF POLITICAL AND MORAL SUPPORT FROM THE UNITED STATES. SHIP VISITS ARE SIMPLY NOT ENOUGH. HE SAID THAT WHILE HE WAS PLEASED WITH THE VREELAND'S VISIT, THE ACTUAL REACTION OF THE MAN IN THE STREET WAS MIXED, I.E., WHY BOTHER TO ALLOW A SHIP VISIT WHEN THE AMERICANS REFUSE TO HELP. OMAR STATED THAT HE FELT U.S. POLICY MAKERS UNDERESTIMATED THE IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC OPINION IN SOMALIA.

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FM AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6907

S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 MOGADISCIO 2131

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8. THE CONSUL TOLD OMAR THAT WE HAD IN FACT BEEN WORKING HARD LOCALLY FOR IMPROVED RELATIONS, BUT THAT, FRANKLY, THE JOB WAS MADE MORE DIFFICULT BY OUR INABILITY IN THE PAST TO ESTABLISH CONTACTS AT ALL LEVELS OF THE SOCIETY AND GOVERNMENT, WHICH WOULD PROVIDE THE OPPORTUNITY FOR THE FREE INTERCHANGE OF IDEAS AND MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING. WE HAD FORMED THE OPINION IN THE EMBASSY, BASED ON EIGHT YEARS OF HARASSMENT AND SURVEILLANCE, THAT SOMALI CONCERNS WITH "SECURITY" AND LIMITING THE ACTIVITIES OF FOREIGNERS MADE IT DIFFICULT IF NOT IMPOSSIBLE TO ACHIEVE THE NECESSARY UNDERSTANDING OF EACH OTHER'S PROBLEMS AND POLICIES. THE CONSUL POINTED OUT THAT DURING THE EARLY STAGES OF THE WAR, THE GSDR EXPLICITLY AND BLANDLY DENIED THAT THE NATIONAL ARMY WAS IN THE OGADEN, WHEN WE KNEW THE CONTRARY. THE CONSUL ASKED RHETORICALLY, HOW IT WAS POSSIBLE TO CREATE ANY KIND OF MEANINGFUL POLITICAL RELATIONSHIP IN SUCH AN ATMOSPHERE. THE CONSUL TOLD OMAR THAT IN ANY CASE, THE EMBASSY DOES INTEND TO SEEK EXPANDED CONTACTS IN SOMALIA, AND EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT THESE EFFORTS WOULD BE SEEN IN LIGHT OF OUR DESIRE TO IMPROVE

RELATIONS AND ESTABLISH THE NECESSARY CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION AT ALL LEVELS, INSTEAD OF, AS IN THE PAST, ATTEMPTS AT "SUBVERSION" OR "ESPIONAGE".

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9. GENERAL OMAR REPLIED THAT HE APPRECIATED THE FRANKNESS OF THE CONSUL'S REMARKS AND THAT HE UNDERSTOOD THE POINTS DEVELOPED. HE SAID, HOWEVER, THAT WE MISUNDERSTOOD THE GOVERNMENT'S ROLE IN RESTRICTING CONTACTS. TO BE SURE, THE NSS WAS A FACTOR, BUT A MINOR ONE. OMAR RETURNED TO HIS POINT THAT WE MISUNDERSTOOD THE POWERFUL INFLUENCE OF PUBLIC OPINION IN SOMALIA. EVERY SOMALI, HE SAID, IS BOTH A SOLDIER AND A COP. EVEN HE, OMAR, COULD NOT BE OBSERVED IN FREQUENT PRIVATE CONTACT WITH THE AMERICANS OR ANY FOREIGN POWER WITHOUT BEING ACCUSED BY THE PEOPLE OF "SPYING" FOR THE AMERICANS.

10. OMAR ENCOURAGED THE EMBASSY TO BUILD CONTACTS, BUT TO DO SO GRADUALLY AND CAUTIOUSLY. HE SAID THAT WHILE THE GOVERNMENT WAS NEVER GOING TO ANNOUNCE ON THE RADIO THAT CONTACTS WITH AMERICANS ARE NOW FREE AND UNLIMITED, THERE WAS REALLY NO NEED TO DO SO. ONCE THERE WAS A PERCEPTION AMONG THE PEOPLE THAT THE US WAS SYMPATHETIC AND SUPPORTIVE OF SOMALIA, PUBLIC OPINION WOULD CHANGE RAPIDLY, BUT SO FAR, THIS GESTURE OF SUPPORT WAS NOT VISIBLE.

11. COMMENT: THIS INITIATIVE BY OMAR IN CONTACTING THE CONSUL IS UNIQUE, AND REFLECTS, I THINK, A SENSE OF SOMALI FRUSTRATION THAT THE "MESSAGE IS NOT GETTING THROUGH" TO THE AMERICANS. THE CONSUL HAS WORKED HARD AT CULTIVATING WORKING LEVEL PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS, AND OMAR MAY HAVE FELT THAT HE WOULD BE AT LEAST A SYMPATHETIC LISTENER. IN CONSIDERING THE TACTICS TO BE PURSUED, I DECIDED IT WOULD BE BEST TO BE BLUNT WITH OMAR, ESPECIALLY IN POINTING OUT HOW SOMALI ATTITUDES, SUSPICION, AND RESTRICTIONS LOCALLY HAVE DETERRED THE

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BUILDING OF CLOSER RELATIONS. OMAR REACHED WELL TO THIS BLUNTNES, AND ASSURED THE CONSUL THAT HE WAS AVAILABLE FOR FURTHER CONTACT AT ANY TIME. OF PRIMARY SIGNIFICANCE IN OMAR'S REMARKS WERE THE STATEMENTS THAT HE COULD DEFEND SOMALIA AGAINST A GROUND INVASION, BUT WAS HELPLESS AGAINST AIR ATTACK, AND OMAR'S PLEA, REPEATED

SEVERAL TIMES, FOR A GESTURE OF POLITICAL AND MORAL SUPPORT. AS I SEE IT, OMAR WAS TRYING TO MAKE THE POINT THAT THE SOMALIS VIEW THE MILITARY SURVEY TEAM IN ITS SYMBOLIC POLITICAL TERMS, ALTHOUGH THERE MIGHT BE OTHER SUCH GESTURES POSSIBLE. OMAR ALSO REPEATED SEVERAL TIMES HIS INABILITY TO UNDERSTAND THE "EMBARGO", I.E., WHAT THE SOMALIS PERCEIVE AS ACTIVE DISCOURAGEMENT OF ITS ALLIES FROM DOING ANYTHING TO HELP SOMALIA MILITARILY.

12. THERE WAS NO INDICATION THAT OMAR CONSIDERED THE CONSUL TO BE ANYTHING OTHER THAN A REGULAR OFFICER OF THIS EMBASSY. IN ANY CASE, I BELIEVE THIS OPENING OF A CHANNEL BY OMAR MAY BE USEFUL, AND INTEND TO KEEP IT IN RESERVE.  
LOUGHRAN

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## Message Attributes

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